

## CLAIMS

The invention is claimed as follows:

1. A gaming device comprising:
  - a plurality of reels;
- 5 a plurality of symbols including at least one wild symbol on the reels;  
and  
at least one winning symbol combination, wherein if after the reels are activated to determine a plurality of said symbols, said determined symbols:
  - (i) include a wild symbol but no winning symbol combination on the 10 reels including that wild symbol, or
  - (ii) do not form a winning symbol combination including the wild symbol that provides an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,  
then at least one of the reels other than the reel having the wild symbol 15 is re-activated for a designated number of activations and an award is provided to a player if one of the winning symbol combinations occurs on the reels during any of said re-activations.
- 20 2. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the designated award amount is predetermined.
3. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the designated award amount is determined based on a wager made by the player.

4. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the designated award amount includes at least one award associated with the winning symbol combinations.

5. The gaming device of Claim 1, which includes a payline associated with 5 the reels, wherein if after the reels are activated to determine a plurality of said symbols, said determined symbols:

(i) include a wild symbol but no winning symbol combination on the payline including that wild symbol, or

(ii) do not form a winning symbol combination including the wild symbol 10 on the payline that provides an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,

then at least one of the reels other than the reel having the wild symbol is re-activated for a designated number of activations and an award is provided to a player if one of the winning symbol combinations occurs on the payline 15 during any of said re-activations.

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6. The gaming device of Claim 1, which includes a plurality of paylines associated with the reels, wherein if after the reels are activated to determine a plurality of said symbols, said determined symbols:

- (i) include a wild symbol but no winning symbol combination on one of 5 the paylines including that wild symbol, or
  - (ii) do not form a winning symbol combination including the wild symbol on one of the paylines that provides an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,
    - then at least one of the reels other than the reel having the wild symbol

10 is re-activated for a designated number of activations and an award is provided to a player if one of the winning symbol combinations occurs on one of the paylines during any of said re-activations.

7. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the symbols include a plurality 15 of wild symbols.

8. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the designated number of activations is predetermined.

20 9. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the designated number of activations is determined based on a wager made by the player.

10. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the symbols include at least one 25 of the following: numbers, letters, characters, multipliers, game elements and images.

11. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the symbols include at least one bonus symbol.
- 5 12. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein an outcome associated with the bonus symbol includes at least one of the following: at least one free spin, at least one free game and at least one multiplier.
13. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the wild symbol includes at least 10 one indicator which indicates at least one symbol on the reels, wherein any winning symbol combinations on the reels include at least the wild symbol and the symbol indicated by the indicator.

14. A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;

a plurality of symbols including at least one wild symbol on the reels;

and

5 at least one winning symbol combination, wherein the reels are activated for at least one activation, and wherein if after said activation at least one of the reels includes:

(i) a wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol, or

10 (ii) a wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol provide an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,

then said reel is held stationary and at least one of the reels other than the stationary reel is re-activated until one of the winning symbol combinations

15 occurs on the reels and an award is provided to a player based on any winning symbol combinations that occur on the reels.

15. The gaming device of Claim 14, which includes a payline associated with the reels, wherein the reels are activated for at least one activation, and wherein if after said activation at least one of the reels includes:

- (i) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on the payline, or
- (ii) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on the payline that provide an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,
  - then said reel is held stationary and at least one of the reels other than the stationary reel is re-activated until one of the winning symbol combinations occurs on the payline and an award is provided to a player based on any winning symbol combinations that occur on the payline.

16. The gaming device of Claim 14, which includes a plurality of paylines

15 associated with the reels, wherein the reels are activated for at least one activation, and wherein if after said activation at least one of the reels includes:

- (i) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on one of the paylines, or
- (ii) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on one of the paylines that provide an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,
  - then said reel is held stationary and at least one of the reels other than the stationary reel is re-activated until one of the winning symbol combinations occurs on one of the paylines and an award is provided to a player based on any winning symbol combinations that occur on one of the paylines.

17. A gaming device comprising:

    a plurality of reels;

    a plurality of symbols including at least one wild symbol on the reels;

    at least one winning symbol combination; and

5      a processor operable to activate the reels and wherein if after said reels are activated, at least one of the reels includes:

        (i) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations on the reels including the wild symbol, or

        (ii) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the

10     wild symbol provide an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,

    then the reel including the wild symbol is held stationary while the reels other than the stationary reel are re-activated for a designated number of activations, wherein an award is provided to a player when any winning symbol

15     combinations occur on the reels.

18. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the designated award amount is predetermined.

20     19. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the designated award amount is determined based on a wager made by the player.

20. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the designated award amount is randomly determined.

21. The gaming device of Claim 17, which includes a payline associated with the reels, wherein if after said reels are activated, at least one of the reels includes

(i) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the 5 wild symbol occur on the payline, or

(ii) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on the payline that provide an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount,

then the reel including the wild symbol is held stationary while the reels 10 other than the stationary reel are re-activated for a designated number of activations, wherein an award is provided to a player when any winning symbol combinations occur on the payline.

22. The gaming device of Claim 17, which includes a plurality of paylines associated with the reels, wherein if after said reels are activated, at least one of the reels includes

(i) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on one of the paylines, or

(ii) the wild symbol, but no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on one of the paylines that provide an award having an award amount equal to or greater than a designated award amount, then the reel including the wild symbol is held stationary while the reels other than the stationary reel are re-activated for a designated number of activations, wherein an award is provided to a player when any winning symbol combinations occur on one of the paylines.

23. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the symbols include a plurality of wild symbols.

5 24. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the designated number of activations is predetermined.

25. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the designated number of activations is determined based on a wager made by the player.

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26. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the designated number of activations is randomly determined.

15 27. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein a probability associated with the wild symbol is less than a probability associated with at least one of the other symbols on the reels.

20 28. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the probability associated with the wild symbol is less than probabilities associated with a plurality of the other symbols on the reels.

29. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein a probability associated with the wild symbol is less than probabilities associated with all of the other symbols on the reels.

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30. The gaming device of Claim 17, wherein the wild symbol includes at least one indicator which indicates at least one symbol on the reels, wherein any winning symbol combinations on the reels include at least the wild symbol and the symbol indicated by the indicator.

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31. A gaming device comprising:

a wagering game;

a plurality of reels; and

a plurality of symbols on said reels, said symbols including at least one wild symbol, wherein if the wild symbol occurs on one of the reels in the game and:

(i) a win involving the wild symbol does not occur on the reels, or  
(ii) a win at a designated level involving the wild symbol does not occur on the reels,

15 then the reel including the wild symbol is held stationary, at least one additional symbol from the plurality of symbols is generated in association with the wild symbol and an award is provided to a player for any wins based on the combination of the wild symbol and the additional symbol or symbols generated on the reels.

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32. The gaming device of Claim 31, wherein the additional symbol includes a wild symbol.

33. A gaming device comprising:

- a plurality of cards;
- a plurality of symbols including at least one wild symbol on the cards;

and

5           at least one winning combination of cards, wherein after a plurality of cards are randomly selected and displayed to a player, if one of the cards includes a wild symbol and there are no winning combinations of cards including the wild symbol, at least one of the cards other than the card with the wild symbol is replaced with a different card for a designated number of rounds

10          and an award is provided to a player when a winning combination of cards occurs in one of the rounds.

34. The gaming device of Claim 33, wherein the card including the wild symbol is held when an award amount associated with an award for any

15          winning combinations of cards is less than a designated award amount.

35. The gaming device of Claim 34, wherein the designated award amount is predetermined.

20          36. The gaming device of Claim 34, wherein the designated award amount is determined based on a wager made by the player.

37. The gaming device of Claim 33, wherein the cards include a plurality of wild symbols.

38. The gaming device of Claim 33, wherein the symbols include at least one of the following: numbers, letters, characters, multipliers, game elements, playing card suits and images.
- 5 39. The gaming device of Claim 33, wherein the symbols one the cards include at least one bonus symbol.
40. The gaming device of Claim 39, wherein the outcome associated with the bonus symbol includes at least one of the following: at least one free 10 round, at least one free game and at least one multiplier.

41. A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;

a plurality of symbols including a plurality of wild symbols on the reels;

and

5 at least one winning symbol combination, wherein if after the reels are activated to randomly determine a plurality of said symbols, said symbols include a wild symbol but no winning combination of symbols on the reels including that wild symbol, then at least one of the reels other than the reel having the wild symbol is re-activated for a designated number of activations  
10 and an award is provided to a player if one of the winning symbol combinations occurs on the reels during any of said re-activations.

42. The gaming device of Claim 41, wherein one of the reels including one

of the plurality of wild symbols is held stationary when the award amount

15 associated with an award for any winning symbol combinations occurring on the reels including said wild symbol is less than a designated award amount greater than zero.

43. The gaming device of Claim 42, wherein the designated award amount

20 is predetermined.

44. The gaming device of Claim 42, wherein the designated award amount

is determined based on a wager made by the player.

45. The gaming device of Claim 42, wherein the designated award amount includes at least one award associated with the winning symbol combinations.

46. The gaming device of Claim 41, which includes a payline associated with the reels wherein one of the reels including at least one of the plurality of wild symbols is held stationary when no winning symbol combinations occur on the payline including the wild symbol, at least one of the reels other than the stationary reel is re-activated for a designated number of activations and an award is provided to the player when any of the winning symbol combinations occur on the payline associated with the reels.

47. The gaming device of Claim 41, which includes a plurality of paylines associated with the reels wherein one of the reels including a wild symbol is held stationary when no winning symbol combinations occur on the payline including the wild symbol, at least one of the reels other than the stationary reel is re-activated for a designated number of activations and an award is provided to the player when any winning symbol combination occurs on the payline.

20 48. The gaming device of Claim 41, wherein the designated number of activations is predetermined.

49. The gaming device of Claim 41, wherein the designated number of activations is determined based on a wager made by the player.

50. The gaming device of Claim 41, wherein the symbols include at least one of the following: numbers, letters, characters, multipliers, game elements and images.

5 51. The gaming device of Claim 41, wherein the symbols include at least one bonus symbol.

52. The gaming device of Claim 51, wherein an outcome associated with the bonus symbol includes at least one of the following: at least one free spin, 10 at least one free game and at least one multiplier.

53. A method of operating a gaming device, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) displaying a plurality of reels including a plurality of symbols, said symbols including at least one wild symbol;
- 5 (b) holding one of the reels stationary if:
  - (i) the wild symbol occurs on said reel and no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on the reels, or
  - (ii) the wild symbol occurs on said reel and no winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol occur on the reels that provide an 10 award having an award amount greater than a designated award amount;
  - (c) activating the reels other than the reel including the wild symbol for a designated number of activations of the reels when the reel including the wild symbol is held stationary; and
  - (d) providing an award to a player for any winning symbol 15 combinations that occur on the reels until there are no activations remaining.

54. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of predetermining the designated award amount.

20 55. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of randomly determining the designated award amount.

56. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of determining the designated award amount based on a wager made by the player.

57. The method of Claim 53, wherein the step of holding one of the reels stationary includes holding one of the reels stationary when the wild symbol occurs on at least one payline associated with the reels and no winning symbol combinations occur on said payline.

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58. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of predetermining the designated number of activations.

59. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of randomly 10 determining the designated number of activations.

60. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of determining the designated number of activations based on a wager made by the player.

15 61. The method of Claim 53, wherein the symbols include at least one bonus symbol.

62. The method of Claim 61, which includes at least one of the steps of providing at least one free spin, at least one free game and at least one 20 multiplier when the bonus symbol occurs on the reels.

63. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of indicating at least one symbol on the reels using at least one indicator associated with the wild symbol, wherein any winning symbol combinations on the reels include at least the wild symbol and the symbol indicated by the indicator.

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64. The method of Claim 53, wherein the steps (a) to (d) are provided to the player through a data network.

65. The method of Claim 64, wherein the data network is an internet.

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66. A method of operating a gaming device, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) displaying a plurality of reels including a plurality of symbols, said symbols including a wild symbol;

5 (b) holding one of the reels stationary if:

(i) the wild symbol occurs on said reel, and

(ii) any award amounts associated with awards provided by winning symbol combinations including the wild symbol that occur on the reels are less than a designated award amount greater than zero;

10 (c) activating the reels other than the stationary reel for a designated number of activations of the reels when it is determined that said reel is to be held stationary; and

(d) providing an award to a player for any winning symbol combinations that occur on the reels until there are no free spins remaining.

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67. The method of Claim 66, wherein the steps (a) to (d) are provided to the player through a data network.

68. The method of Claim 67, wherein the data network is an internet.

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69. A method of operating a gaming device, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) displaying a plurality of cards including a plurality of symbols, said symbols including at least one wild symbol;
- 5 (b) holding one of the cards if:
  - (i) the wild symbol appears on said card, and
  - (ii) no winning combinations of cards are indicated;
- (c) replacing at least one of the other cards besides the held card for a designated number of rounds when it is determined that the card including
- 10 the wild symbol is to be held; and
- (d) providing an award to a player for a winning combination of cards indicated in the rounds.

70. The method of Claim 69, wherein the step of holding one of the cards includes holding one of the cards when the wild symbol appears on the card and wherein an award amount associated with any awards provided by winning combinations of cards is less than a designated award amount.

71. The method of Claim 70, wherein the symbols include at least one bonus symbol.

72. The method of Claim 71, which includes the step of providing at least one of a free round, a free game and a multiplier when the bonus symbol appears on at least one of the cards.

73. The method of Claim 69, wherein the steps (a) to (d) are provided to the player through a data network.

74. The method of Claim 73, wherein the data network is an internet.